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HEREFORD CATHEDRAL FROM THE RIVER.



TALES OF ENGLISH MINSTERS

HEREFORD

BY

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"THE CHILDREN'S BOOK OF EDINBURGH," "CHILDREN'S TALES
FROM SCOTTISH BALLADS," ETC.

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

IN COLOUR

HEREFORD CATHEDRAL	<i>frontispiece</i>
THE QUEEN HANDS THE DRUGGED CUP TO ETHELBERT	<i>facing page 8</i>
THE NORTH TRANSEPT OF THE CATHEDRAL .	<i>on the cover</i>

IN BLACK AND WHITE

	PAGE
THE CATHEDRAL	17
THE NAVE	24
THE SCREEN	33
TOMB OF BISHOP CANTELUPE	40



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TALES OF ENGLISH MINSTERS

HEREFORD

It is possible that anyone who visits Hereford Cathedral, after having visited the other two great Cathedral Churches of the West of England, Worcester and Gloucester, may feel a little disappointed, for it is smaller and plainer than either of them, and there are not so many stories that can be told about it. It has no Royal Tomb, nor any great outstanding Saint, yet in one respect it is the most interesting of the three.

Indeed, in this one respect, it is the most interesting of all the English Cathedrals, for it does not only carry our thoughts back, as the others do, to the days when the torch of Christianity was re-lit in England by missionaries from Iona and Canterbury, but it takes them farther back still to the days when the early British Church existed, and had Bishops of her own ; for, as doubtless you know, Christianity

was brought to Britain from Gaul as early as two hundred years after Christ.

We do not know who brought it. The names of the first missionaries are forgotten. Probably they were humble Christian soldiers who came in the ranks of the Roman legions, and they would be followed by a few priests sent after them by the Church in Gaul to minister to them ; and from the ranks of these priests one or two Bishops would be consecrated.

It all happened so long ago that it seems vague and far away, and it is difficult to pick out authentic facts.

We can only say with an old historian, that ‘we see that the Light of the Word shined here, but see not who kindled it.’

Perhaps you know also that this early Christianity was swept away from all parts of the country, except in Ireland and Wales, by the coming of the heathen Angles, Saxons, and Danes.

We can easily understand how these two parts of what to us is one Kingdom, managed to hold the Faith. They were more or less undisturbed by the fierce invaders who came from the North of Germany and from Denmark, and who were quite

content to settle down in fertile England without taking the trouble to cross the Irish Channel and fight with the savage Irish tribes, or penetrate into the wild and hilly regions of Wales.

So it came about that, while the English people were so harassed and worried with war and cruelty that they forgot all about the new doctrines which had been beginning to gain a slender foothold in their land, the people of Wales had still their Church and Bishops.

These Bishops seem to have held much the same Sees as the Welsh Bishops hold to-day. Bangor, Llandaff, Menevia or St. Davids, Llanelwy or St. Asaph, and three others with strange Welsh names, one of which was Cærffawydd, which meant the 'place of beeches,' and which we now know as Hereford.

For in these days Wales was larger than it is now, and was bounded by the Severn, and Cærffawydd was a Welsh town, if town it could be called, not an English one.

These Bishops were governed by an Archbishop, who is spoken of sometimes as living at Carleon-on-Usk, sometimes at Llandaff, and sometimes at Hereford.

Now, of course you have all heard about King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table ; and you may have read about them in Tennyson's 'Idylls of the King' ; about their bravery, and chivalry, and purity, and how they took an oath—

‘To break the heathen and uphold the Christ ;
To ride abroad, redressing human wrongs ;
To speak no slander—no, nor listen to it ;’

and about Bishop Dubric, who crowned the King, at Cirencester, and married him to Guinevere his wife.

Part of those wonderful stories is purely legendary, but part is true, for it is believed that King Arthur was a real person, and so were many of his Knights.

Bishop Dubric, or Dubricus, certainly was a real person, for we know that he was Bishop of Cærfawydd, and it is said that it was Sir Geraint, the Knight who married Enid, and rode with her, in her old faded dress, to Court, who built the first little church here, where the Bishop had his chair or ‘stool.’

Be this as it may, it is certain that there was a tiny little Cathedral here, long before the other English Cathedrals were thought of, for you know



THE QUEEN HANDS THE DRUGGED CUP
TO ETHELBERT. *Page 20.*

that a church is a Cathedral, no matter how small it is, if it has a Bishop's official chair inside it. And it is probable that this little Cathedral was built of wood, and roofed with reeds or wattles.

It must have been rebuilt, or at least repaired, once or twice during the centuries that followed, but we know very little about its history until we come to the year A.D. 794, when a terrible event happened which led to a larger and more stately church being erected, this time of stone.

If you have read the story of St. Albans Cathedral,* you will know what this event was; but I will try to tell you more fully about it here, for although it is very sad, it gives us a true picture of what even the life of Kings was, in these dark and troublous ages.

The name of the King who reigned over East Anglia—that is, the land of the 'North folk' and the 'South folk,' or, as we call it, Norfolk and Suffolk—in these days was Ethelbert, and he had an only son, Ethelbert the Ætheling.

This Ethelbert was such a goodly youth, so tall and straight and handsome, so skilled in all manner of knightly exercises, and so kind to the

* 'Tales of English Minsters: St. Albans.'

poor and needy, that all his father's subjects adored him.

He loved God with all his heart, and would fain have given up his princely state and retired into some religious house, so that he might have more time to study His Word, and to learn about Him.

But he had plenty of what we call 'common sense,' so when his father died, and he was left King in his stead, he said to himself, 'Now must I bestir myself and put away the dreams of my youth. I had visions of forsaking the world like Cuthbert or Bede, or the holy Paulinus, who won King Edwin to the Faith.* But if it had been the will of God that I should serve Him in this manner, I would not have been born an Ætheling,† and inheritor of the throne of East Anglia; and, seeing He hath thus dealt with me, I must serve Him according to His will, and not according to mine own. Therefore will I seek to be a just and true King.'

Then, knowing that a King has need of a wife, he sent for all the aldermen and wise men of his Kingdom, as soon as the days of mourning for his father were over, and told them that he wished to

* 'Tales of English Minsters: York.'

† Heir Apparent.

wed the Princess Elfreda, daughter of Offa, King of Mercia, and that he willed that a deputation should go from among them to the Court of that Monarch, to ask, in his name, for her hand.

Now, this Offa was a very great and mighty King, who cared for nothing so much as to extend the boundaries of his Kingdom, and he had succeeded in doing this in an extraordinary way. He had conquered the parts of the country which are now known as Kent, Sussex, Essex, and Surrey, and on the West he had driven back the Welsh beyond Shrewsbury, and had built a huge earthwork, which was known as 'Offa's Dyke,' to mark the boundary of their domains. In this way it came about that in his days Cærffawydd, or 'Fernlege,' as it had come to be called, was in Mercia instead of Wales.

He had built for himself a great Castle at Sutton, near the banks of the Wye, and here he was holding his Court when King Ethelbert's Ambassadors arrived, and laid their request before him.

He granted it at once, for he had but two daughters, the elder of whom, Eadburh, was married to Beorhtric, King of the West Saxons, who owed allegiance to him, and he thought that he would also have a certain power over the young

Monarch of the East Angles if Elfreda became his wife.

So the grave bearded aldermen returned to their own land, and told their Royal Master how they had fared.

King Ethelbert was overjoyed at the success of his suit, and appointed a day on which he would set out, accompanied by all his retinue, to travel to the pleasant West Country in order to fetch home his bride.

Now, in those days people believed a great deal in dreams, and omens, and signs, and the old chroniclers tell us that, just before the young man set out, his mother, Queen Laonorine, came to him, and begged him not to go, because it was a very dark and cloudy morning, and she had had a bad dream the night before.

‘Look at the clouds,’ she said; ‘they be so black, methinks they portend evil.’

‘Nay, but clouds break,’ answered her son cheerily.

‘Yea! Verily! But ’tis from clouds a thunder-bolt may come,’ replied the anxious mother.

‘Let us not trust in omens, but in the living God, who “ordereth a good man’s goings,”’ replied

the King, and, kissing her, he joined his nobles, who were already on horseback waiting for him outside, and rode gaily away.

It was the month of May, and for four days they rode through the fresh green lanes, till they drew near to where the powerful Monarch dwelt.

They crossed the Severn at Worcester, and rode over the great hill of Malvern, and when they were within a day's journey of the Royal Palace of Sutton, they pitched their tents at Fernlege, on the banks of the Wye, and there Ethelbert and most of his nobles waited, while one or two knights rode forward to inform King Offa of his arrival.

In the evening, so the quaint old story goes, the young King left his tent, and, ascending a little hillock, from whence he could obtain a wide view of the surrounding country, sat down at the root of a giant oak-tree.

Everything was so fair and peaceful that he smiled as he remembered his mother's fears, and he thought to himself how delighted she would be when he arrived at home once more, accompanied by his beautiful young bride. Musing thus he fell asleep, and dreamed a dream.

He dreamt that he was standing beside the little

church which stood down by the riverside, which had been founded by Sir Geraint, and that all of a sudden an angel appeared, who carried a basin in his hand, and, to the King's horror, the basin was full of blood.

But the angel's calm face was quite untroubled as he picked a little bunch of herbs and dipped them in the blood, and began to sprinkle the rude little building with the scarlet drops.

And lo ! to Ethelbert's amazement, the building began slowly to change ; it grew bigger and higher, and the reeds and wattles turned to blocks of stone, and presently a magnificent Minster stood in its place.

Apparently it was some great Festival, for a sweet-toned organ was pealing inside, while from all directions multitudes of people came thronging to the church, singing hymns of praise as they did so. And as they drew near the King, he heard that there was one name which mingled with the name of God and of the Saints upon their lips, and that name was his own, 'Ethelbert.'

Wondering greatly, he awoke, and the vision passed quickly from his mind, for at that moment his Ambassadors returned, bearing courteous greet-

ings from the Mercian Monarch, who hoped that on the morrow he would come with all speed to his Palace.

Meanwhile, at Sutton, a scene was going on which is almost the story of Ahab and Jezebel and Naboth's vineyard over again.

For King Offa and his wife, Queen Quendreda, were sitting in the King's private chamber, talking about their coming guest and his fertile dominions, just as Ahab and Jezebel had talked about Naboth.

And Quendreda was putting an awful thought into Offa's mind. 'It were a good thing,' so she whispered, 'to have the King of East Anglia for a son-in-law, but it were a better to murder him quietly, and add his Kingdom to that of Mercia. Then would Offa be a mighty Monarch indeed.'

I think there is no sadder picture in the whole of English history than this, which shows us this great and wise King, for remember he *was* a great and wise King, who had done an immense amount of good to his country, whose name might have been handed down to us, like that of Alfred the Great, or Victoria the Good, or Edward the Peacemaker, sitting listening to the advice of his wife, who was a thoroughly wicked woman, seeing

clearly how bad, and cruel, and treacherous that advice was—aye, and saying so, too—and yet feeling tempted in his heart of hearts to follow it, because of the one weak spot in his otherwise strong character, his ungovernable lust for land and power.

If only he could have looked into the future, and seen how that one dark deed would leave a stain on his memory, which would last when his good deeds would be forgotten, and how a blight would descend on his house almost as though it were a direct judgment from God, I think he would have ordered his wife to be silent, and never to speak such words to him again.

But to see into the future is impossible. So, as if to shake the responsibility from his own shoulders, he did not actually forbid the scheme, but he pretended to be very angry, and strode out into the hall, and called to his knights and to his son, Prince Ecgfrith, to mount and ride with him to meet the stranger King.

When he was gone, the unscrupulous Queen, who felt that she was now at liberty to work her wicked will, sent for the King's most trusty henchman, Cymbert, the Warden of the Castle, who was



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tall, and strong, and a mighty fighter, but who had a heart as hard as stone.

When he had answered the summons, and come and bowed low before her, the Queen said to him : ‘Cymbert, it is not fitting that thou, the Warden of this mighty Castle, shouldst be but a slave and a thrall, wouldst thou not like to be a freeman?’

‘That would I, O Queen,’ replied the henchman.

‘And more than that, wouldst thou earn land of thine own, where thou couldst build a house?’

‘Yea, verily!’ was the answer.

‘All these things shall be thine,’ said Quendreda, ‘if thou wilt but carry out my orders. Thou knowest that this very day the King of the East Angles cometh, that he may wed my daughter. ’Tis my wish to have him put to death, so that his Kingdom may be joined to that of Mercia.

‘To this end I will lodge him in the Royal chamber, beneath which, as thou knowest, runs a secret passage, which leads to the little postern in the wall.

‘Thou must arrange a trap-door in the flooring, which will sink or rise at will, and over it I will cause a couch to be placed.

‘Then, to-night, at supper, I will make the

Monarch pledge me in a cup of wine, into which I will empty a potion. When he feeleth sleep come creeping upon him, he will retire to his chamber, and throw himself on the couch, and, to a man like thee, all the rest will be easy.

‘When he is dead, thou canst take his body out of the postern by stealth, and bury it, and no man will know what hath become of him.’

At the very moment that this wicked scheme was being arranged, the two Kings and their trains had met, and after greeting one another courteously they all came riding, with great joy, home to the Castle.

The black-hearted Queen went out to meet them, but her fair young daughter, Princess Elfrida, was not with her. She was too shy and modest to greet her lover in public, so she had crept up alone to the top of the Castle, and stood there, peering over the battlements, to see what manner of man he had become. For it was not the first time that they had met. They had been playmates in their youth when Ethelbert as Ætheling had visited Sutton with his father, and they had thought much of each other ever since.

And it chanced that Ethelbert glanced up at the

battlements, and when he saw the maiden, with her flaxen locks and blue eyes, looking down at him, his heart leaped for joy, and as soon as he had greeted the Queen, and quaffed a cup of mead, he made his way up to where she was, and there they sat together, so the old books tell us, all the sunny afternoon, while the rest of the gallant company, King Offa, and Prince Ecgfrith, and all the knights and nobles, went a-hunting the wild wolves in the forest near by.

And as they sat they talked together, and Ethelbert told the Princess how all the people of East Anglia were looking forward to welcome their young Queen; and, both of them being true Christians, they made a solemn vow that they would rule their land in 'righteousness and the fear of God, even as King Ethelbert of Kent and Bertha his wife had ruled their kingdom.'*

That night a great feast was held in the Palace of Sutton, a feast more magnificent and gorgeous than had ever been held there before. King Offa sat at the head of the table, wearing his royal robes and the golden crown of Mercia on his head. Beside him sat his wife, and close by were the youthful

* 'Tales of English Minsters: Canterbury.'

bride and bridegroom, and 'that noble youth Ecgfrith' as the old chroniclers call him.

Nobles and thanes and aldermen crowded round the board, and gleemen who sang fierce war-songs of Hengist and of Cerdic, and of Arthur and his Knights, and the red wine was poured out, and they drank long and heartily; more heartily, perhaps, than they ought to have done.

For the Queen made Cymbert, who stood behind the King's chair, fill his cup again and again with strong, fierce wine, which had been a present from the Frankish King, and when his brain was heated, and he was not master of himself, she leant against him, and whispered in his ear; and the poor half-drunken Monarch muttered that she could do as she would, little recking that from that time the glory would depart from his house.

Then she spoke lightly and gaily to her guest, handing him a golden cup filled with wine as she did so.

'Now must thou drink to us, fair sir, and to thy bride, even as we have drunk success and long life to thee.'

And the young King took it gladly, and drank the blood-red draught, little dreaming that it had

been drugged by the cruel hand that gave it to him.

But so it was, and soon, feeling drowsy, he retired to his chamber, and dismissing his attendants, threw himself, all undressed, on the couch, and fell into a heavy slumber.

You know the rest of the sad story : how the trap-door fell, and the couch fell with it, and how Cymbert the Warden either smothered him with the silken cushions among which he was lying, or, what is more likely, cut off his head with his own sword, for the tale is told either way.

When the cruel deed was done, the Warden and the servants who were with him, took the lifeless body, and carried it out secretly by the postern, and at first thought of throwing it into the river.

But remembering that the Queen had ordered it to be buried, Cymbert made the others dig a great hole, into which they flung it, and, such was the wildness and lawlessness of the time, when they had covered it up, and stamped down the earth upon it, they thought that the whole matter was ended.

That was a very great mistake, however, for, although the deed was done, there were many,

many consequences to follow. It was as when a stone is thrown into the midst of a pond. The stone may sink, but in sinking it makes ripples which go on widening and widening until they cover the whole surface of the water.

Of course the murder could not be hidden, for on the very next morning the East Anglian thanes and noblemen demanded to know what had become of their Master, and when they discovered the fate that had befallen him, they made haste to flee, in case they too should be murdered.

Then the next thing that happened was that Princess Elfrida, the poor broken-hearted young bride, felt so shocked and terrified at the thought that her own father had allowed the man she was about to marry to be put to death in such a treacherous manner, that she was afraid to live at home any longer, so she slipped out of the Palace, accompanied by one or two trusty attendants, and fled to a monastery at Crowland in the Fen country, where she became a nun.

Perhaps that was the first thing that made King Offa's conscience begin to prick, but, like King Ahab, he tried to brazen the matter out ; saying to himself, "The deed is done and I cannot undo it,

so I may as well have the Kingdom.” So he sent an army to East Anglia, and took possession of it.

But I think that all the time he must have been feeling more and more unhappy, for, remember, at heart he was a good man, and had lived, up to this time, a noble and honourable life; and a certain terror must have fallen upon him when, two months later, his wife Quendreda died, and, sitting by his desolate hearth, he remembered the old story of the King of Israel who had done as he had done, and on whom the wrath of God had so speedily fallen.

It must have been almost a relief when one day Eadwulf, Bishop of Lichfield, came to him and said: ‘What is this that thou hast done? Killed a defenceless man in thine own Palace, and taken possession of his Kingdom. Hadst thou killed him in open battle, no one could have blamed thee, but to murder him in secret when he came as a friend was not worthy of thee, O King.’

‘I know it, I know it,’ replied Offa, who was now thoroughly sorry for his deed; ‘but it was the wine which I drank, which my wife gave to me. It inflamed my brain so that I knew not what I said.’

Now, at that time people had the idea that they could atone for any wicked act that they had done by giving money or lands to the Church, or going on some pilgrimage; so Eadwulf told King Offa that he thought that first of all he had better see that King Ethelbert's body had Christian burial—you remember it had just been thrown into a hole—and that after that he must go a pilgrimage to Rome, and tell the Pope the whole story, and do whatever he told him to do as a punishment.

Then he added some words which were very solemn, but which turned out only too true. This was what he said: 'Because thou hast repented of thy evil deed thy sin will be forgiven; nevertheless, the sword shall not depart from thine house. It was in thine heart that Mercia should be the greatest of English Kingdoms, and so it might have been. But now the glory shall depart from thee, and another King, even the King of Wessex, shall be greater in power and shall become the first King of the whole of England.'

Offa did as he was bid. He had the body of the young King taken from its rude grave, and buried in the little church of reeds and wattles at Fernlege,



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HEREFORD CATHEDRAL : THE NAVE

near which Ethelbert had sat and mused on the night before his death.

Then he went to Rome and told the whole story to the Pope, and said how penitent he was, and how gladly he would do anything in his power to atone for his sin ; and the Pope, who wanted to have more churches built in England, told him to go home again, and show his sorrow by building a really fine church at St. Albans—where the first English martyr Alban laid down his life for the Faith—and another at Fernlege, where there was only the plain little Cathedral Church of wood.

Offa promised that he would do these things, and when he returned to England he gave orders that the two buildings should be begun without delay. Very soon afterwards he died, and it fell to the lot of one of his Viceroys, whose name was Milfred, to carry out his plans at Fernlege, and to build an ‘admirable stone church’ there.

And so King Offa vanishes from history, and although we cannot doubt that his penitence was very deep, and that his great sin was forgiven, it is very striking to read how Bishop Eadwulf’s words were fulfilled, and how the glory did indeed ‘depart from his house.’

We have seen how his wife died, and how his youngest and fairest daughter became a nun. Then he himself died and was buried, not in either of the two great Minsters which he had caused to be erected, but in a little chapel on the banks of the Ouse, near Bedford. One day a dreadful flood came, and the Ouse overflowed its banks and washed away the chapel, and King Offa's bones along with it, and no one ever knew what became of them.

Soon afterwards his only son, Prince Ecgfrith, died, and slowly the Kingdom of Mercia grew less and less important, and the little Kingdom of Wessex grew greater and greater, until its King, King Ecgbert, great-grandfather of Alfred the Great, became 'Overlord' of the whole of England.

As for King Offa's eldest daughter, Eadburh, her story is the saddest of all, for she was a wicked woman like her mother; and she did one bad thing after another, until at last she had neither money nor friends left; and the old chroniclers tell us that, 'in the days of Alfred, who reigned over the West Saxons, and who was Overlord of all the Kingdoms of England, there were many men yet living who

had seen Eadburh, daughter of Offa, and wife of Beorhtric, begging her bread.'

But it is pleasant to think that if Eadwulf's words came true in such a terrible way, the dream or vision which poor King Ethelbert had on the last night of his life came true also, but in a much happier and sweeter manner.

For, as I have said, under the direction of Milfred, King Offa's Viceroy, a noble stone church replaced the little wooden one at Fernlege, or, as it soon began to be called, 'Hereford,' which means 'The Ford of the Army,' because, when the Mercian soldiers wished to pass into Wales, they crossed the River Wye at this point.

This new church was dedicated to 'St. Ethelbert and the Blessed Virgin,' and into it, when it was finished, the Bishop's chair was carried.

For, although the young King could not be called a martyr, he certainly left the record of a pure and brave and noble life behind him, and it seemed fitting—and we are glad that it did so—that the memory of his name should linger, all down the ages, round the stately Cathedral which was built as an expiation of his death, and in which, for half a century at least, his body rested.

It was not taken into the new Cathedral at once, however, which seems rather curious, but it was left for more than a hundred years in the grave in which it had been laid by Offa, before he went on his pilgrimage to Rome.

Perhaps this was because there was constant fighting going on all these years between the people of Mercia and the Welsh; and Hereford, being just on the border of the two Kingdoms, was so constantly exposed to the danger of being raided, or looted, or burned down, that no one had any time to think about anything else.

But at last there came a period of peace, and the Bishop of Hereford who was living then, whose name was Æthelstan, determined that he would restore the Cathedral, which had got sadly knocked about in these border quarrels. When he had done so, he took King Ethelbert's bones from their humble resting-place, and had them brought into his newly restored church and placed in a gorgeous shrine which he had prepared for their reception.

A great misfortune fell upon this good Bishop, for, for the last thirteen years of his life, he was blind, and I have no doubt that, during all the

long period when he could not see, it must have been a great joy to him to think, as he was led out and in to Service, that he had been allowed, before the darkness fell on him, to repair the House of God, and to provide a fitting tomb for the royal youth in whose memory it had been erected.

Alas ! he little knew what a few short years were to bring ; and we almost wish that the poor old man had died before his life-work was all undone.

For in 1056 a quarrel took place between Elfgar, Earl of Chester, and Edward the Confessor, who was King of England at that time. I do not know what the quarrel was about, but at any rate Elfgar was summoned to appear before the 'Witan,' or Parliament in London, on a charge of high treason.

His guilt was not proved, but the King was so angry with him that he made him an outlaw, which was, of course, very unjust.

Elfgar, as was to be expected in these old warlike days, determined to have his revenge, so he went and hired the services of a band of Danish pirates who chanced to be cruising about in their ships round the coast of Ireland. Then he went to Gruffydd, King of North Wales, who was his friend and

neighbour, and asked him if he would help him also. Gruffydd agreed readily, for he hated the English, and soon a fleet of Danish ships came sailing up the Severn, full of fierce pirates and wild Welshmen, all of whom were sworn to obey Elfgar and Gruffydd.

They came to the West Country because they knew there were a great many rich churches there that they could plunder, and as soon as the river became too shallow for their ships, they disembarked, and marched in the direction of Hereford.

Now, as perhaps you know, Edward the Confessor was very fond of the Normans, and he had made one of his favourites, a Norman noble named Ralph, Earl of Hereford. This Ralph was a brave man, and quite ready to lead the citizens and the people of the neighbourhood out against the lawless invaders, but he made one great mistake.

It was the custom, in his own land, for all the gentlemen to fight on horseback, instead of on foot, as was the way of the Anglo-Saxons, and he insisted on his followers following the foreign fashion, setting the example himself, with the result that everyone felt awkward and embarrassed, and very

soon it became evident that Elfgar and his friends were going to have the best of it.

Seeing this, Earl Ralph lost his head, and ran away, and perhaps we cannot wonder that the simple country folk followed his example, although, alas! one or two hundred of them were overtaken and killed before they had gone very far.

Then the victorious hoard of savages, for they were little else, swept on, straight to the Cathedral, where they knew that the holy vessels, at least, and the ornaments on the altar, would be of gold or silver.

But if they thought that they could obtain these easily they were mistaken, for they had not reckoned on the kind of men with whom they had to deal. For the brave priests determined to defend their church to the last, and shut and barricaded the doors in their faces; and, although at last they were overcome and the church looted, it was not until seven of their number lay dead in the great Western doorway.

A scene of wild confusion followed, and when the wild invaders marched away again there was nothing left of the little city or of the great church which Æthelstan had restored with so

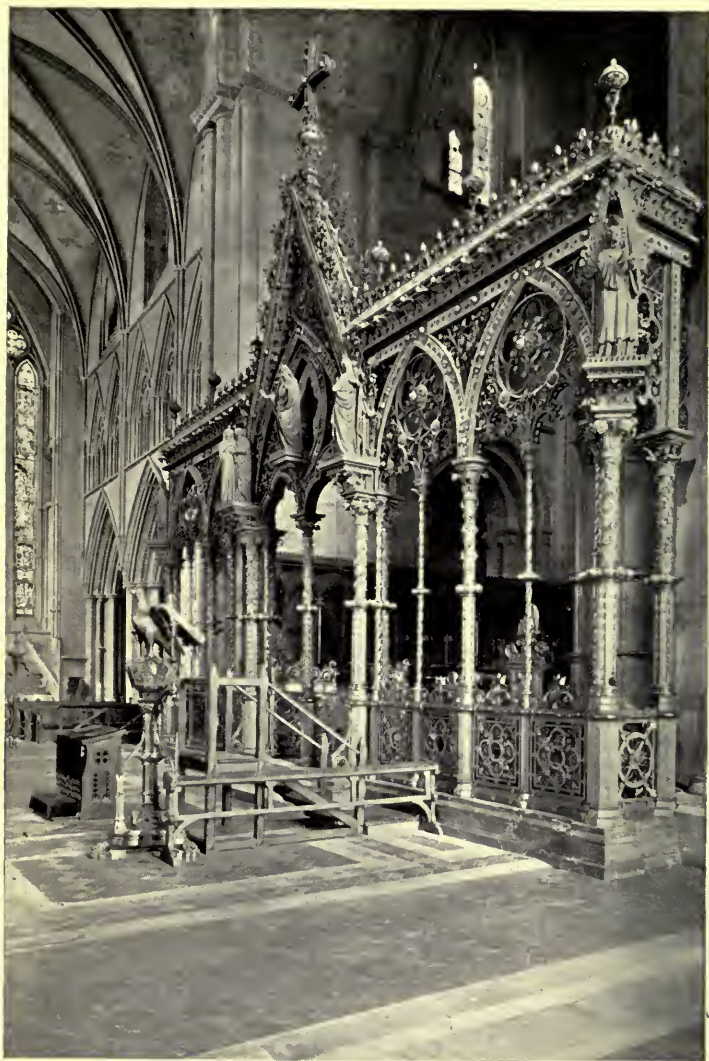
much labour and pride but a few smouldering ruins.

Among other things, King Ethelbert's shrine was destroyed, and, although we hope that his bones were taken care of, and buried somewhere in the church, or else burned up altogether, we cannot tell for certain what became of them.

Now, if there is one thing which we admire more than another about the grand old builders of the Middle Ages, it is their perseverance.

They would spend a hundred years over the planning and building of a church, when one man died another taking his place; and when—as happened here, and many times elsewhere—the church was destroyed, either by accident or design, they lost no time in useless lamentations, but just patiently began to build it up again, trusting that in the future a time would come when their work would be prized and taken care of, as it deserved to be.

So we find that in a very few years the work was begun once more from the beginning, this time by a Norman Bishop, named Robert de Losinga; and we are glad to know that his work remains, for if we go into the Cathedral we can see



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HEREFORD CATHEDRAL : SCREEN,

part of it still standing, for it was under his directions that parts of the choir and of the south transept were built.

That was more than eight hundred years ago.

Then followed the building of the nave, the Lady-chapel, the north transept, and the tower, until, some four hundred years after Bishop Losinga had begun it, the great church was completed, and stood much as it stands to-day, except that a wooden spire surmounted the square tower of stone.

This spire was taken down in 1790.

Now that we have learned all about its history, let us enter the Cathedral and look what it is like inside.

As you see, it is built of red stone, in the form of a cross, the choir being separated from the nave by a curious screen, which is made of four metals—iron, copper, brass, and bronze.

The nave is very grand and stately, with rows of massive Norman pillars and beautifully carved arches.

Although St. Ethelbert's shrine no longer exists, if we go into the choir we can see the place where it stood—here, in this arch, between the two pillars nearest the altar on our right-hand side as we face

it. A statue of the murdered King has been placed, as you see, on a pedestal, close to one of the pillars, and here, on the floor, in front of the altar, is a circular slab of marble, on which is traced a representation of his murder.

But if we cannot visit St. Ethelbert's shrine, we can visit another, which is six hundred years old, and which was erected to hold the bones of a very celebrated Bishop of Hereford, who was such a good man, that, after his death, people thought he deserved the name of Saint;—Thomas de Cantilupe.

It stands in the north transept, and is just a great marble chest, with what looks like another 'openwork' chest, also of marble, above it.

Round the sides of the lower chest a great many figures are carved, and if we look at them closely we shall see that they are figures of Knights Templars, with their cloaks and crosses, for Bishop de Cantilupe was Grand Master of that Order.

Perhaps he obtained this office because he was very fond of soldiers, and when he was a little boy he wanted to become one.

This was a very natural wish, for he was the son of a powerful Baron, who had an estate and

‘manor’ in Buckinghamshire, and to become a soldier was the common lot of most boys in his position.

He had an uncle, or great-uncle, however, who was Bishop of Worcester, and this Prelate had other hopes for his nephew’s career.

One day, when little Thomas was staying with him, he asked the child what he would like to be.

‘A soldier,’ said the boy promptly, looking up in the Bishop’s face.

The old man patted him gently on the head.

‘Then, sweetheart, thou *shalt* be a soldier, but a soldier of the King of kings,’ he replied, ‘and thou shalt fight under the banner of thy namesake, St. Thomas of Canterbury, and thy harness shall be the cassock of a priest.’

So the little fellow put the idea of earthly warfare out of his head, and set himself to study Greek and Latin instead, and when he was older he went to Oxford, and then to Paris with his brother Hugh, and soon became a very distinguished student.

When he returned to England he became Chancellor of the University of Oxford, and a very good Chancellor he was, for he knew how to rule

the students who were often very high-spirited and turbulent, just as students are nowadays.

But their high spirits took rougher and more dangerous forms, just as the times were rougher and more dangerous, for they used to fight with one another with swords, and bows and arrows, and the Chancellor used to get hold of these weapons and confiscate them, until such time as their owners came to beg them back on condition that they kept the peace.

Afterwards King Henry III. gave him a more important position, that of Chancellor of England, for you must remember that in those days the clergy were politicians as well as priests, and often held the highest offices of State. Then, in 1275, when he was quite an elderly man, he became Bishop of Hereford.

And a true 'Father in God' he proved himself to be, to the poor people, at least, for he had one or two very serious and rather funny quarrels with the rich and powerful nobles who lived in his Diocese. These quarrels arose not because he was jealous of his own dignity, but because he was jealous of the dignity of the Church, and he imagined that any slight or insult paid to him as

Bishop, was really a slight and insult paid to the Church of God.

In fact, he must have been rather a puzzle to the rich people over whom he was set to rule in spiritual matters, for some of his views were so different from theirs.

They saw that he was haughty and imperious to anyone, no matter how great he might be, who disobeyed him, or encroached on his dignity, and they saw also that he was always splendidly dressed, like a King indeed, for he wore a tunic trimmed with Royal miniver, and had a miniver covering to his bed.

But they did not understand that under his haughtiness and imperiousness, which certainly were faults, and under the apparent luxuriousness of his dress, lay a very real desire, not for his own honour and glory, but for the honour and glory of the King of kings, whose ambassador he felt himself to be.

Sometimes they caught a glimpse of his real self and were more puzzled still, for when they were dining with him they would see him deliberately pass dish after dish which they knew he was very fond of, and content himself with the plainest and

poorest fare, in order that he might learn to say 'No' to his own wishes.

Then, when the meal was ended he would rise, and select some dainty from the table, and carry it out of the hall with his own hands; and if he had been followed, he would have been found beside the bed of some poor sick servant, coaxing him to eat what he had brought to him.

They knew also that he ordered bales and bales of woollen stuff to give to the poor in winter, with which to make stout cloaks and petticoats, and that he examined the goods most carefully when they arrived, to see that the colours were nice and bright, and just what he wanted them to be.

Once, as was his wont, he was going to visit a poor sick person in a miserable hovel in the town, when a high-born Baron met him, and remonstrated with him, telling him that such work was beneath his dignity, and that he should leave it to the common clergy.

'Sire,' replied Bishop Thomas gravely, 'I have to give an account to God for the souls of the poor as well as of the rich;' and the Baron had no answer to make.

There is just one other story which I will tell

you about him, and this shows his haughty and imperious side.

The Castle at Ledbury belonged to him as Bishop, so did the right of hunting over the Malvern Hills, which were Church lands.

It is quite possible that he did not care in the least for hunting himself, and that he would have granted the privilege to anyone who had come and asked him for it. But when, one day, he was riding with his attendants on these same Malvern Hills, and heard the sound of a hunting-horn, and, on asking what it meant, was told that Gilbert de Clare, Earl of Gloucester, who was at that time the most powerful noble in England, also claimed the right of hunting there, and was out that day with his hounds, his anger rose, and he rode forward alone to meet the Earl and order him off the ground.

The Earl looked at him contemptuously, and, answering with a sneer that 'he was not going to be driven off his ancestral land by a "clergiaster," and that 'he had a good mind to chastise him for his impertinence,' rode on.

Not a word spoke the Bishop; he simply turned his horse's head and galloped back to his attendants.

A few hours later the Earl and his followers, tired out with the chase, had dismounted, and were resting under the shade of a wide-spreading oak, when the trampling of hoofs was heard.

Looking up, they saw an extraordinary procession, a procession which was generally only to be seen in a church.

There was the Bishop in the foreground, vested in mitre, cope, and stole, and there, behind him, rode his attendant priests and acolytes, carrying lighted candles, and a great bell, and a book !

And while the Earl stared at them, half in anger, half in fear, the book was opened, the candles extinguished, the bell tolled, the most solemn curses of the Church levelled at his head, and a form of excommunication read, whereby he was denied all the rites of his religion, even Christian burial itself.

And all this because he had hunted the wild deer on the Malvern Hills in defiance of Bishop de Cantilupe, which in Bishop de Cantilupe's eyes meant in defiance of Almighty God.

It was not only with the English Barons that the Bishop had differences, he had them with the Pope himself, when he thought that the rights of



HEREFORD CATHEDRAL: TOMB OF BISHOP CANTILUPE.

the Church of England were being tampered with ; and it was when he was returning from Rome after having been to the Pope about one of those differences, that he died in Italy, on August 25, 1282.

His desire was that his bones should be laid to rest in his own Cathedral Church in far-away England, so, as it was an almost impossible task to convey a dead body across Europe in those days, do you know what his followers did ? They *boiled* his body, until the flesh separated from the bones ; then they buried the flesh in the Church of St. Severus near Florence, and the bones, which were now quite easy to carry, they brought to Hereford, and buried them in the Lady-chapel. They were afterwards removed to a little chapel known as the Chapel of St. Catherine, and at last this beautiful shrine was prepared for them, and they were placed inside.

Not very far from the shrine of Thomas de Cantilupe, on the east wall of the transept, there are two tablets, one above the other, which I think you would like to look at, for they tell a very curious and pathetic story.

As you see, they have both been placed there in memory of the same man, Captain Arkwright, but

not at the same time. For if you read the inscriptions you will see that one of them is thirty-one years older than the other.

Captain Arkwright was a young soldier who was very fond of Alpine-climbing; and on October 13, 1866, he set out to try to ascend Mont Blanc. He never returned, for he was caught in an avalanche, and swept away out of sight. Although careful search was made, his body could not be found, and after a time all hope of ever finding it was given up, and this topmost tablet was erected to his memory.

Thirty-one years passed by, and those of his friends who were alive had become elderly men and women, and I suppose his memory had grown a little dim to them, when strange news came from the little village of Chamonix, which lies at the foot of the great White Mountain.

You all know what a glacier is? A river of ice which moves very very slowly down the side of a snow mountain, but which comes at last to the region where the air is so warm that it melts, and runs away down into the valley in a torrent of muddy water.

Well, Captain Arkwright's body had been swept

by the avalanche into a deep crevasse, or 'crack' in one of these glaciers, and all these years it had been moving, encased in ice, slowly down the mountain, until, on August 23, 1897, it appeared at the foot of the glacier near Chamonix, in a perfect state of preservation, just as it was on the day when he was killed.

It was taken from the ice which had held it so long and so mysteriously, and laid in Chamonix churchyard, and one of Arkwright's old school-fellows, who by this time had become Dean of this Cathedral, had the second, or lower, tablet erected as a memorial of the strange event.

Now let us cross the church, and go into the south transept to look at a curious raised tomb which stands there, which I am sure all the little boys and girls, at least, would like to look at.

As you see, three figures rest upon it. A father, a mother, and a tiny little baby, who lies half-hidden among the draperies of her mother's gown.

If you look at the baby's forehead you can trace the letters of her name, 'Anne'; and this tells you that the tomb is what is known as a 'chrysome'—that is, it is the burial-place of a little child who died within a month of its baptism, and who was

buried in its baptismal robe. As a rule in such a case, a cross is marked on the baby's brow, but this child is marked with its name instead.

The girl-mother, for she was only eighteen, who died when her baby was born, and was buried along with her, was the wife of a knight named Sir Alexander Denton, who was so broken-hearted at his loss that he made up his mind that he would never marry again, and that when he died he also would be buried here.

But in later years he married another lady, and, after all, was buried in a church in Buckinghamshire, though, as you see, his effigy has been placed here to make the family group complete.

There are three very ancient things belonging to this Cathedral at which we must look before we leave it—a very old map, which hangs in that wooden case on the wall, quite close to the 'chrysome' tomb; a very old chair which stands on the north side of the altar; and a very old manuscript, which we can see in the library.

Let us look at the map first. At one time it was believed to be the oldest map in the world, and although an older one has been discovered in Germany, the two must have been made about

the same time, for they closely resemble each other.

As you may think, it is very precious, so precious that during the time of the Civil War it was hidden under the floor of a little chantry on the other side of the church, and was only discovered some hundred and fifty years ago.

If we examine it we shall see what the people who lived in the year 1300 or thereabouts imagined the world to be like. To begin with, they made the top of the map east, and the bottom west, so their ideas of direction were different from ours.

The world is round, surrounded by the sea, and at the top of it lies the garden of Eden, with rivers running out of it. In the centre is Jerusalem, and all round that city are representations of Old Testament events : the Flood, and the Ark ; the Red Sea, and the journey of the Children of Israel ; Lot's wife, etc.

Great Britain is marked on the map, with the names of very few towns, but most of the Cathedrals are noted ; while the other countries of Europe are also shown, with the animals which were supposed to live there, and it is very curious to

notice how monkeys were believed to live in Norway, and serpents in Germany.

We must not spend too much time here, however, for we have still to see the old chair and the old book.

The chair is in the sanctuary, on the north side of the altar. It stands here because it was used as the Bishop's chair (for it is so plain we can hardly call it a throne) until the present throne, which stands near the choir-stalls, was erected.

We do not know when it was made, or how many Bishops have sat in it, but it must be at least nearly eight hundred years old, for we know that the wicked King Stephen visited Hereford, after its Bishop had been forced to fly, and in his pride and arrogance dared to sit in his place during Service, wearing his Royal crown.

Now let us go out by this door in the south wall of the nave, and pass along what is known as the 'Bishop's Cloister,' until we come to the library which is built on the site of the 'Old West Cloister.' The building is new, but the books it contains are very ancient and valuable.

For this is a chained library—that is, most of the books are fastened by chains to a rod which is

placed above the shelf on which they stand, so that anyone can take them down, and lay them on the broad desk-like shelf which finds a place below the bookshelves, and read them there, but they cannot be taken away.

Here is the very ancient book which I have mentioned. It is a copy of the Gospels, written in Anglo-Saxon characters, and it must be at least a thousand years old.

But old as it is, there are many other books, bound in boards of thin oak covered with sheep-skin, which are quite as interesting.

Here are two Prayer-Books, for example, one of which lets us see the Order of Service used at Hereford in 1265, the other that which was used at Bangor, in Wales, in 1400.

They are quite different, and, as you look at them, the librarian will tell you that one is 'Hereford Use,' the other 'Bangor Use.'

For you must understand that long ago the Service in church was not the same all over England, as it is to-day. One form of Service was used in one Cathedral, and in all the surrounding district ; another, a little different, was used in another, and so on.

In this way there was a 'Roman Use,' which was the same as that used in Rome; a 'Sarum Use,' which was the most common, and was the same as that used at Salisbury; a 'Hereford Use'; a 'Lincoln Use'; a 'York Use'; and a 'Bangor Use.'

Let us take down this enormous volume, and see what it contains. The whole of the Books of Genesis and Exodus, with beautifully printed notes, and spaces for other notes, which have never been put in. Look how straight and neat and symmetrical the columns of printing are, and the spaces between them. How did the monks manage this, do you think? See, these tiny punctures in the vellum, like tiny pin-pricks, tell us. They used a little wheel with tiny spikes in the rim, to space their columns.

Here is an ancient book of devotion. To whom did it belong? Open it and you will find out, for 'H. Latimer' is written inside—he who died for his belief at Worcester.

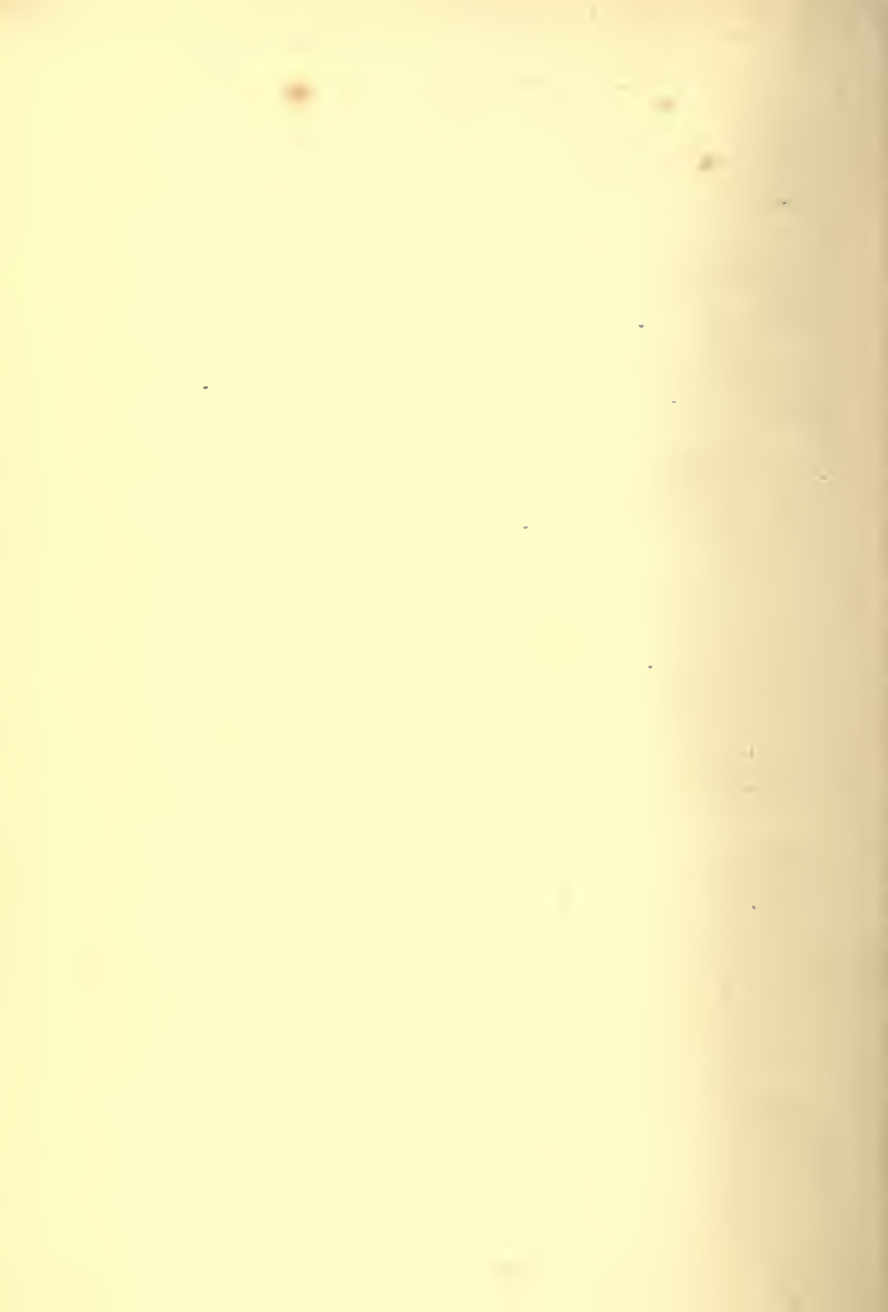
Here is the 'Neuremberg Chronicle,' a famous book in bygone days, for it was almost the only picture-book that children had, and it contains two thousand quaint woodcuts, showing the progress

of the world from the Creation down to the time it was written.

Here is a 'Breeches' Bible, which gets its name from the fact that the printer has printed that Adam and Eve made themselves 'breeches' instead of 'aprons'; and near it is a 'Cider' Bible, which was printed by a man named Nicolas de Hereford, who was so accustomed to the beverage used in his native county that he translated the verse in Judges, which tells us that Sampson's mother was to drink no strong drink, by 'drink no cider.'

Here we can see William the Conqueror's seal, and here is that of Oliver Cromwell.

Indeed, there are so many interesting and curious things to be seen in the chained library at Hereford that a book could be written about them alone.



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